

(c) If the Commission decides that a Notice of Inquiry, Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, or a public hearing on the petition would contribute to its determination whether to commence a rulemaking proceeding, it will publish an appropriate notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER, to advise interested persons and to invite their participation.

(d) The Commission will not consider the merits of the petition before the expiration of the comment period on the Notice of Availability.

(e) The Commission will consider all comments filed within the comment period prescribed in the relevant FEDERAL REGISTER notice. The Commission may, at its discretion, consider comments received after the close of the comment period.

§ 200.4 Disposition of petitions.

(a) After considering the comments that have been filed within the comment period(s) and any other information relevant to the subject matter of the petition, the Commission will decide whether to initiate a rulemaking based on the filed petition.

(b) If the Commission decides not to initiate a rulemaking, it will give notice of this action by publishing a Notice of Disposition in the FEDERAL REGISTER and sending a letter to the petitioner. The Notice of Disposition will include a brief statement of the grounds for the Commission's decision, except in an action affirming a prior denial.

(c) The Commission may reconsider a petition for rulemaking previously denied if the petitioner submits a written request for reconsideration within 30 calendar days after the date of the denial and if, upon the motion of a Commissioner who voted with the majority that originally denied the petition, the Commission adopts the motion to reconsider by the affirmative vote of four members.

§ 200.5 Agency considerations.

The Commission's decision on the petition for rulemaking may include, but will not be limited to, the following considerations—

(a) The Commission's statutory authority;

(b) Policy considerations;

(c) The desirability of proceeding on a case-by-case basis;

(d) The necessity or desirability of statutory revision;

(e) Available agency resources.

§ 200.6 Administrative record.

(a) The agency record for the petition process consists of the following:

(1) The petition, including all attachments on which it relies, filed by the petitioner.

(2) Written comments on the petition which have been circulated to and considered by the Commission, including attachments submitted as a part of the comments.

(3) Agenda documents, in the form they are circulated to and considered by the Commission in the course of the petition process.

(4) All notices published in the FEDERAL REGISTER, including the Notice of Availability and Notice of Disposition. If a Notice of Inquiry or Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was published it will also be included.

(5) The transcripts or audio tapes of any public hearing(s) on the petition.

(6) All correspondence between the Commission and the petitioner, other commentators and state or federal agencies pertaining to Commission consideration of the petition.

(7) The Commission's decision on the petition, including all documents identified or filed by the Commission as part of the record relied on in reaching its final decision.

(b) The administrative record specified in paragraph (a) of this section is the exclusive record for the Commission's decision.

PART 201—EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS

Sec.

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AUTHORITY: 2 U.S.C. 437d(a)(8), 437f, 438(a)(8), 438(b); 26 U.S.C. 9007, 9008, 9009(b), 9038, 9039(b).

SOURCE: 58 FR 59645, Nov. 10, 1993, unless otherwise noted.

§ 201.1 Purpose and scope.

This part prescribes procedures for handling *ex parte* communications made in connection with public funding, Commission audits, litigation, rulemaking proceedings and the advisory opinion process. Rules governing such communications made in connection with Commission enforcement actions are found at 11 CFR 111.22, while provisions setting forth employee responsibilities under the Commission's Standards of Conduct rules are found at 11 CFR 7.15.

§ 201.2 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) *Ex parte communication* means any written or oral communication by any person outside the agency to any Commissioner or any member of a Commissioner's staff which imparts information or argument regarding prospective Commission action or potential action concerning:

- (1) Any candidate or committee applying for or participating in the public funding process, or
- (2) Any ongoing audit, or
- (3) Any pending litigation matter, or
- (4) Any pending rulemaking, or
- (5) Any pending advisory opinion request.

(b) *Ex parte communications* does not include the following communications:

- (1) Statements by any person publicly made in a public forum; or
- (2) Statements or inquiries by any person limited to the procedural status of an open proceeding involving an application for public funding, a rulemaking, an advisory opinion request, an audit being conducted pursuant to 26 U.S.C. 9007 (a) and (b), 9008 (g) and (h), or 9038 (a) and (b), or a litigation matter.

(c) *Commissioner* means an individual appointed by the President to the Federal Election Commission pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 437c(a).

(d) *Commissioner's staff* means all individuals working under the personal supervision of a Commissioner including executive assistants and executive secretaries.

§ 201.3 Public funding, audits and litigation: *Ex parte* contacts prohibited.

(a) In order to avoid the possibility of prejudice, real or apparent, to the public interest in Commission decision-making during the public funding process, in audits undertaken by the Commission, and in any litigation to which the Commission is a party, no person outside the agency shall make or cause to be made to any Commissioner or any member of any Commissioner's staff any *ex parte* communication regarding any candidate or committee's eligibility for or entitlement to public funding; any audit; or any pending or prospective Commission decision regarding litigation, including whether to initiate, settle, appeal, or seek certiorari, or any other decision concerning a litigation matter; nor shall any Commissioner or member of any Commissioner's staff entertain any such *ex parte* communications.

(b) The requirements of this section apply:

(1) In the case of public funding, from the time a primary election candidate submits to the Commission the letter required by 11 CFR 9033.1(a), Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates submit to the Commission the letter required by 11 CFR 9003.1, or a committee seeking convention funding registers with the Commission as required by 11 CFR 9008.12(a)(1) or 9008.12(b)(1), until the start of the audit process.

(2)(i) In the case of an audit undertaken pursuant to 26 U.S.C. 9007 (a) and (b), 9008 (g) and (h), or 9038 (a) and (b), from the date of the Commission's letter to a presidential campaign committee, a convention committee, or a host committee asking that it make a pre-inventory check of its records, prior to the commencement of audit fieldwork by the Commission, through the end of the audit process; and

(ii) In the case of an audit undertaken pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 438(b), from the date the Commission's staff circulates a document for Commission approval containing a proposed referral to undertake an audit, until the Commission publicly issues the final audit report.

(c)(1) A Commissioner or member of a Commissioner's staff who receives an oral ex parte communication concerning any matters addressed in paragraph (a) or (b) of this section shall attempt to prevent the communication. If unsuccessful in preventing the communication, the Commissioner or staff member shall advise the person making the communication that he or she will not consider the communication and shall, as soon after the communication as is reasonably possible but no later than three business days after the communication, unless special circumstances make this impracticable; or prior to the next Commission discussion of the matter, whichever is earlier, prepare a statement setting forth the substance and circumstances of the communication, and deliver the statement to the Designated Agency Ethics Official for placement in the file of the matching fund request, audit or litigation case.

(2) A Commissioner or member of a Commissioner's staff who receives a written ex parte communication concerning any Commission action or potential action concerning any candidate or committee's eligibility for or entitlement to public funding, or any audit, or any prospective Commission decision or action concerning any pending litigation case, during the period described in paragraph (b) of this section shall, as soon after the communication as is reasonably possible but no later than three business days after the communication, unless special circumstances make this impracticable; or prior to the next Commission discussion of the matter, whichever is earlier, deliver a copy of the communication to the Designated Agency Ethics Official for placement in the file of the audit or litigation case.

§201.4 Rulemaking proceedings and advisory opinions: Ex parte contacts reported.

(a) A Commissioner or member of a Commissioner's staff who receives an

ex parte communication concerning any rulemaking or advisory opinion during the period described in paragraph (b) of this section shall, as soon after the communication as is reasonably possible but no later than three business days after the communication unless special circumstances make this impracticable, or prior to the next Commission discussion of the matter, whichever is earlier, provide a copy of a written communication or a written summary of an oral communication to the Commission Secretary for placement in the public file of the rulemaking or advisory opinion. The Commissioner or staff member shall advise any person making an oral communication that a written summary of the conversation will be made part of the public record.

(b) The requirements of paragraph (a) of this section apply:

(1) In the case of a rulemaking proceeding, from the date a petition for rulemaking is circulated to Commissioners' offices, or the date on which a proposed rulemaking document is first circulated to the Commission or placed on an agenda of a Commission public meeting, through final Commission action on that rulemaking.

(2) In the case of an advisory opinion, from the date a request for an advisory opinion is circulated to Commissioner's offices through the date on which the advisory opinion is issued, and during any period of reconsideration pursuant to 11 CFR 112.6.

§201.5 Sanctions.

Any person who becomes aware of a possible violation of this part shall notify the Designated Agency Ethics Official in writing of the facts and circumstances of the alleged violation. The Designated Agency Ethics Official shall recommend to the Commission the appropriate action to be taken. The Commission shall determine the appropriate action by at least four votes.